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Sixtieth session
Agenda items 14, 15, 94 and 108

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Sixtieth year

Letter dated 17 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the pleasure of enclosing the press statement of the ninety-sixth regular session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from 6 to 7 September 2005 (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 14, 15, 94 and 108, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Tawfeeq Ahmed **Almansoor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Press statement issued at the ninety-sixth regular session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council 2 and 3 Sha`ban A.H. 1426 (6 and 7 September A.D. 2005)

The Ministerial Council held its ninety-sixth regular session on Tuesday and Wednesday, 2 and 3 Sha`ban A.H. 1426 (6 and 7 September A.D. 2005), in Jeddah, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and Chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council. Attending was His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Ministerial Council offered its deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz, the royal family and our brothers and sisters the Saudi people, on the loss to the GCC countries, the Arab nation and the Islamic Ummah of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. The Council prays to the Almighty to grant the deceased His infinite grace and forgiveness, bring him to dwell in paradise and reward him amply for the memorable achievements he had the good fortune to carry out, including the expansion of the Two Holy Places, the construction of houses of God and the propagation of the Holy Book; for his blessed efforts in serving Islam and in elevating the prestige of Muslims; and for his promotion of the causes of right and justice, not only in the region but throughout the Arab world and elsewhere.

The Ministerial Council offered its congratulations and best wishes to King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz and Crown Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz on their taking over the reins of government of their country, praying God to assist them and grant them success in pursuing beneficent and constructive work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, bringing prosperity to its people, our brothers and sisters, and continuing the advancement of the noble work of the Cooperation Council towards broader and more comprehensive horizons together with their brothers, the distinguished leaders of the GCC States, may God preserve them. The Council further commended the resoluteness of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in continuing his earnest and tireless work in the service of Islam and in support of Arab and Islamic causes, the establishment of international peace and security and global economic growth.

The Ministerial Council also expressed its sincere good wishes to His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, congratulated him on the success of his surgery and his safe return and beseeched the Almighty God to grant him health and strength and take him under His care in order that he might continue his charitable and beneficent work on behalf of the State of Kuwait and its loyal people.

The Ministerial Council reviewed the achievements realized since its previous session in the area of joint cooperation in various fields and the developments that had taken place in the sphere of regional and international political and security issues.

In the field of economic cooperation, the Ministerial Council considered the reports and minutes of a number of ministerial committees as well as reports on joint economic activity.

In the area of communications, postal service and information technology, the Council considered the recommendations made by the fourteenth meeting of the ministerial committee regarding settlement rates between communications companies in the GCC States, the issuance of a common postage stamp in all the GCC countries on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Council and coordination in the field of postal security and Internet information security.

With regard to trade, the Council considered the conclusions reached by the trade cooperation committee at its thirty-second meeting regarding the model trademark law (regulations); the committee's approval of the terms of reference of the consumer protection committee; and the recommendations of the third symposium on combating commercial fraud and imitation.

In the area of planning and development, the Council considered the conclusions reached by the ministerial committee at its fourteenth meeting with respect to population policy and the measures and programmes adopted by GCC countries to correct imbalances in demographic structure; efforts towards the issuance of a human development report on the GCC countries; and the conducting of a study on the establishment of a GCC statistical centre.

In the area of transport and communications, the Council considered the conclusions of the ministerial committee at its ninth meeting relating to the study of the establishment of a railway connecting the member States, the elimination of the difficulties facing the communications sector, the study of the establishment of a Gulf navigation aid company and a study to assess transport infrastructure in the member States.

On the question of GCC relations with other countries and international groups, the Ministerial Council considered the results of the second round of negotiations between the GCC States and China and the meetings of experts from the two sides, held in Beijing on 20 and 21 June 2005, at which the discussions revolved around issues related to the agreement on the establishment of a free trade zone between them. The Council also considered the results of meetings of experts from GCC States and the European Union held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat on 26 and 27 July 2005 within the framework of the negotiations on free trade between the two sides. The Ministerial Council expressed its satisfaction over the results of the meetings.

In the area of human and environmental affairs, the Ministerial Council took cognizance of the note of the General Secretariat on follow-up to the steps taken towards completing the implementation of decisions and guidelines that emerged from the twenty-fifth session of the Supreme Council. These related to the field of education; the approval of the ministers of education, expressed at their meeting held in Kuwait in February 2005, of the implementation of a number of programmes

contained in the document on the overall development of education; the conclusions reached by the ministers of higher education at their eleventh meeting, held at the General Secretariat in March 2005, on programmes relating to higher education; and the working group formed by the General Secretariat to prepare an assessment report on the progress of work in implementing the decisions taken by the Supreme Council.

In the field of protection of human and environmental health from the effects of depletion of the ozone layer, by way of support to the efforts being made at the national, regional and international levels within the framework of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Council recommended that, in the GCC countries, the system of uniform guidelines for the control of substances that deplete the ozone layer should be submitted to the Supreme Council at its next session.

In the military sphere, the Ministerial Council was informed of progress in military cooperation during the preceding period. It expressed satisfaction with the steps carried out and emphasized the importance of completing the various related procedures and arrangements.

In the sphere of security coordination and cooperation between member States, the Council considered the measures taken by those States and expressed its satisfaction concerning them.

The Ministerial Council expressed its sorrow and its censure regarding the terrorist acts against peace-loving citizens that had occurred in a number of countries. It emphasized that such criminal acts only added to the determination of the world to combat terrorism and consolidate international cooperation against it and to eliminate the terrorists and those who were behind them. The Council reiterated the need for all States to join forces in order to fight terrorism in all its forms.

The Council emphasized once again that it welcomed and supported the Riyadh Declaration and the recommendations that had issued from the International Counter-Terrorism Conference. One of the most important of those recommendations was the proposal by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, for the establishment of an international counter-terrorism centre, which would doubtless make a vital and active contribution to international counter-terrorism efforts. Hence the Council's support for efforts aimed at establishing a task force under United Nations auspices to study the recommendations concerning the centre that were contained in the proposed declaration.

Regarding the work of the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Ministerial Council considered the views of the Advisory Board concerning the evaluation of the Cooperation Council's work over the past 23 years as well as its views on terrorism.

In the political sphere, the Ministerial Council extended its congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran, on his victory in the Iranian presidential elections. It expressed the hope that the coming period would be marked by positive developments in the relations between the Council and Iran, based on good-neighbourliness, shared interests and non-interference in internal

affairs, and that the Islamic Republic of Iran would take concrete confidence-building steps towards the establishment of security, stability and prosperity for the peoples of the region.

The Ministerial Council, discussing a number of important issues raised at both the regional and international levels, reasserted its well-known views and staunch positions on them, namely:

- Its support for the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands, the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, and over the territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of those islands, as constituting an integral part of the United Arab Emirates;
- Its continued regret over the failure of contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran to produce any positive results towards resolving the issue of the three islands, which would contribute to strengthening security and stability in the region;
- The consideration of all peaceful means towards the restoration of the right of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands;
- Its invitation to the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and the international community to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or recourse to the International Court of Justice.

With regard to Iraq, the Council reviewed the new developments taking place there, in particular the further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation owing to increasing violence and the thwarting of efforts to further the political process aimed at establishing constitutional foundations approved by all segments of the Iraqi people for a new, united Iraq enjoying security, stability and prosperity for all Iraqi brothers and sisters.

Here again the Ministerial Council reaffirmed its known and well-established positions in this regard, the most important of which are as follows:

- The condemnation of all criminal terrorist acts that target civilians and the kidnapping of innocent persons, including ambassadors and other members of the diplomatic corps in Iraq and members of humanitarian and religious institutions;
- Support for and endorsement of all efforts towards national reconciliation and the participation of all segments of the Iraqi people in the political process, so as to avoid the negative repercussions of a failure of those efforts on Iraq's unity, independence and sovereignty;
- Its continued expectation that the Iraqi people will join hands in order to achieve the security, stability and well-being to which they aspire, reaffirming the unity of Iraqi soil and reasserting their Iraqi and Islamic identity, so as to become once again effective members of the Arab world and the international community;
- The expression of the hope that Iraq will regain its security, stability and prosperity and resume its positive, active role in the Gulf and the Arab world in general as well as internationally, abiding by the resolutions constituting international legitimacy and living in peace and security with its neighbours and the rest of the world;

- Renewed condemnation of the mass killings of Iraqi nationals and the killing of Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees and nationals of other States, committed by the former Iraqi regime, as well as of the flagrant violations of human rights, Islamic and other fundamental moral principles and Arab values that continue to come to light as mass graves are uncovered;

- Encouragement of the United Nations, in collaboration with the Iraqi Government and other authorities concerned, to redouble efforts to arrive at a final solution for the return of Kuwaiti property, the Kuwaiti national archives and other documents seized by the former Iraqi regime during its occupation of Kuwait.

The Ministerial Council reviewed recent developments in the Palestinian territories and the Middle East peace process and emphasized the following points:

- The Ministerial Council hoped that the evacuation of the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip would be followed by steps towards total withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian lands so as to enable the Palestinian people to build an independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital;

- In that connection, the Council reaffirmed the commitment of the GCC countries to the peace initiative proposed by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz, at the Arab Summit held in Beirut in 2002, and adopted by the Summit as the Arab peace initiative for the region. The initiative, which is based on the resolutions establishing international legitimacy, is considered the correct framework for achieving a just and comprehensive peace and resolving the Palestinian question;

- The Ministerial Council cautioned against the threats issued by extremist Jewish groups calling for the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and emphasized that such threats could only inflame Muslim sensibilities, as they related to violations of their holy places;

- It emphasized further that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East would be achieved only with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State having Jerusalem as its capital and Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from all Arab lands in southern Lebanon;

- The Council appeals to the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the States of the European Union, the United Nations and the international community as a whole to continue their efforts to activate the road map and the Arab initiative in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East;

- It calls once again on the international community to take action to turn the Middle East into a region free of all weapons of mass destruction, including the Gulf region, and to induce Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all of its nuclear facilities to the international inspections regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency as a basis for any future security arrangements;

- Welcoming the new Lebanese Government, it reaffirmed the desire of the GCC countries to support the political and economic stability and security of their brothers and sisters, the Lebanese people. The Council expressed its hope

that all national forces would come to an accord that would maintain Lebanon's unity, cohesion and well-being and condemned Israel's repeated threats and acts of aggression against the country's sovereignty and independence.

The Ministerial Council expressed its sadness and its sincere condolences to its brothers and sisters, the people of Iraq, over the terrible calamity that had taken the lives of hundreds of Iraqis when the Al-A'immah Bridge collapsed, and prayed God Almighty to protect them with His grace and grant their families and loved ones solace and fortitude.

The Council also expressed its deep sorrow over what had befallen the city of New Orleans in the United States of America as a result of hurricane Katrina, which had caused losses of life and property. The Council expressed its solidarity with the United States of America stemming from the feelings of friendship that tie the GCC countries to the United States.

Issued in Jeddah on 3 Sha'ban A.H. 1426 (7 September A.D. 2005)